

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Randall Tobias To Be Global AIDS Coordinator and an Exchange With Reporters

July 2, 2003

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. I appreciate very much our Secretary of State for joining us, and Tommy Thompson, the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary. I want to thank Andrew Natsios, who's the Administrator of USAID. I want to thank Joe O'Neill, who is the Office of National AIDS Policy, for joining us. I want to thank Elias Zerhouni, who is the Director of the NIH. Where are you, Elias? There you are. Thank you for coming, Doctor. And Tony Fauci is here as well. Honored you're here, Tony. It's good to see Richard Lee Armitage, who is the Deputy Secretary of the Department of State. Thank you for coming, Rich.

I appreciate the Tobias family for joining us. Marianne, thanks for coming, and Paige and Tim and Todd and Amy, I'm honored you all are here as well.

Five weeks ago I signed into law the Emergency Action Plan for AIDS Relief. It's one of the largest humanitarian undertakings in our history. The plan will provide \$15 billion over the next 5 years to fight AIDS abroad. Millions of lives depend on the success of this effort, and we are determined to succeed.

To direct this mission, I have chosen a superb leader who knows a great deal about lifesaving medicines and who knows how to get results. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Randall Tobias to serve as the Global AIDS Coordinator.

Randy is one of America's most talented and respected executives. He was vice chairman of AT&T and chairman of ATT International, guiding the firm through immense organizational challenges. He went to head Eli Lilly and Company, one of our Nation's largest and most innovative pharmaceutical companies. He is a highly regarded civic leader and philanthropist in his home State of Indiana. Throughout his

career, Randy has shown the ability to manage complex organizations and to navigate government bureaucracies. He has earned a reputation as an executive of great energy, resourcefulness, good judgment, and integrity.

As Global AIDS Coordinator, Randy will have the rank of Ambassador and will report directly to Secretary of State Powell. He will coordinate all of our international HIV/AIDS activities for all of our Government departments and agencies. He will oversee all resources of this program. And he will work with the faith-based and community groups to get the job done. He will report regularly to Congress on the progress and effectiveness of our efforts.

Randy Tobias has a mandate directly from me to get our AIDS initiative up and running as soon as possible. We'll work quickly to get help to the people who need it most, by purchasing low-cost antiretroviral medications and other drugs that are needed to save lives. We will set up a broad and efficient network to deliver drugs to the farthest reaches of Africa, even by motorcycle or bicycle.

We will train doctors and nurses and other health care professionals so they can treat HIV/AIDS patients. Our efforts will ensure that clinics and laboratories will be built or renovated and then equipped. Childcare workers will be hired and trained to care for AIDS orphans, and people living with AIDS will get home-based care to ease their suffering.

Throughout all regions of the targeted countries, we will provide HIV testing. We will support abstinence-based prevention education. Faith-based and community organizations will have our help as they provide treatment and prevention and support services in communities affected by HIV/AIDS. And we're developing a system to

monitor and evaluate this entire program, so we can be sure we're getting the job done.

Next week I will go to Africa to meet with leaders of African countries and with some of the heroic men and women who are caring for the sick and are saving lives. They deserve our praise. They deserve our help without delay, and they will have our help.

When I visit Africa, I will reaffirm our Nation's commitment to helping Africans fight this disease. America makes this commitment for a clear reason directly rooted at our founding: We believe in the value and dignity of every human life. We're putting that belief into practice.

We have a lot of work ahead of us, and we're eager to get started. I'm hopeful that the Senate will act quickly to confirm Randall Tobias as our Global AIDS Coordinator and that the United States Congress will fully fund my request for this lifesaving initiative. I'm also hopeful that other nations of the world will join us to combat the AIDS pandemic.

I want to thank you very much for coming. May God bless our work, and may God bless the work of Randy Tobias.

[At this point, Mr. Tobias made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you, Randy. Good job.

I'll answer a couple of questions here today. Let me start off with Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

Multinational Forces for Iraq

Q. Mr. President, a posse of small nations like the Ukraine and Poland are materializing to help keep the peace in Iraq. But with the attacks on U.S. forces and the casualty rates rising, what is the administration doing to get larger powers like France and Germany and Russia to join the American occupation there?

The President. Well, first of all, we'll put together a force structure to meet the

threats on the ground. And we've got a lot of forces there ourselves. And as I said yesterday, anybody who wants to harm American troops will be found and brought to justice. There are some who feel like that if they attack us, that we may decide to leave prematurely. They don't understand what they're talking about, if that's the case.

Let me finish. There are some who feel like that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is: Bring them on. We've got the force necessary to deal with the security situation. Of course we want other countries to help us. Great Britain is there. Poland is there. Ukraine is there, you mentioned. Anybody who wants to help, we'll welcome the help. But we've got plenty tough force there right now to make sure the situation is secure. We always welcome help. We're always glad to include others in. But make no mistake about it—and the enemy shouldn't make any mistake about it—we will deal with them harshly if they continue to try to bring harm to the Iraqi people.

I also said yesterday an important point, that those who blow up the electricity lines really aren't hurting America. They're hurting the Iraq citizens. Their own fellow citizens are being hurt. But we will deal with them harshly as well.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Liberia

Q. Sir, Liberians are hopeful the U.S. will send peacekeepers. What's the likelihood of that, and how soon will you decide?

The President. Yes.

Q. And is there a danger of U.S. forces being stretched too thin?

The President. Well, look, we're looking at all options. I've tasked the Secretary of State to talk to Kofi Annan on how best to deal with Liberia. And we're concerned when we see suffering; there's people who are suffering there. They've got the—the

political instability is such that people are panicking.

But the good news is, there's a cease-fire in place now. And one of the things that Colin is going to do is to work closely with the United Nations to see how best to keep the cease-fire in place. We're exploring all options as to how to keep the situation peaceful and stable.

One thing has to happen: Mr. Taylor needs to leave the country. And Colin has made that a—I made it clear publicly. I've just made it clear again. He made it clear to Kofi Annan. In order for there to be peace and stability in Liberia, Charles Taylor needs to leave now.

And—but we're looking at all options, Steve, and—but Colin has got the diplomatic initiative taking place.

Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Conversation With President Putin

Q. Mr. President, we understand you talked with President Putin this morning.

The President. I did. He wished me a happy birthday. [Laughter]

Q. It was a birthday phone call?

The President. I expect you to do the same thing. [Laughter]

Q. Happy birthday to you, a few days early.

The President. Thank you, sir. It's not until the 6th, however. [Laughter]

Q. You can never be too early with these things.

The President. That's right. [Laughter]

Q. But did you discuss the situation in Iran—

The President. Yes, we did.

Q. —and did you discuss the situation in Liberia?

The President. No, we did not discuss the situation in Liberia. We did discuss the situation in Iran. I thanked him for keeping the pressure on the Iranian Government to dismantle any notions they might have of building a nuclear weapon.

And we're making progress on that front. Not only does Vladimir Putin understand

our concerns and shares the concerns; the EU, for example, has sent out a very strong statement to the Iranians that the world expects them to conform with the IAEA, to cooperate with the IAEA, and to get rid of any plans to develop a nuclear weapon.

We also talked about North Korea. And I appreciate his understanding that the best way to deal with North Korea is to do so in a multinational forum, where the United States and China and South Korea and Japan and, hopefully, Russia all sit down with the North Koreans and make it clear that the world expects them to dismantle a nuclear weapons program and, at the same time, will be willing to help the starving North Korean people.

We're making progress on both fronts, and it's helpful to be able to cooperate with Russia in dealing with matters of international security.

Yes, Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Definition of Marriage

Q. Mr. President, do you support or do you oppose a Federal constitutional amendment that would define marriage as a union between a man and a woman?

The President. I don't know if it's necessary yet. Let's let the lawyers look at the full ramifications of the recent Supreme Court hearing. What I do support is the notion that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Any other questions? I'm willing to exhaust questions today. I feel like I'm on a roll. [Laughter]

Q. I've got—

The President. Yes, Steve.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. There's been some recent good news out of the Middle East. Would you like to comment on that? What do you expect the parties to do now, the Palestinians and Israelis?

The President. Well, we're pleased with—

Q. And when is Prime Minister Abbas coming?

The President. I don't know that yet.

Q. Okay.

The President. We are pleased with the progress in the Middle East. I want to thank the parties in the Middle East for willing to take a risk for peace. I am pleased with the hard work that our Secretary of State has done, along with Ambassador Wolf, who has been shuttling back and forth between parties, reminding people of the commitments they made to our Government—me personally—the commitments they made to me personally in Jordan.

I am optimistic, but I also recognize the nature of the Middle East. I mean, there are people there who still hate. They hate Israel. They hate the idea of peace. They can't stand the thought of a peaceful state existing side by side with Israel. And they are willing to—may be willing to attack. And what we must continue to do is to reject that kind of thought. That's why we spoke out clearly. I spoke out, the Secretary of State has spoken out, on Hamas. Hamas is not a peaceful organization when they're willing to blow people up and destroy innocent life. And so we are making progress, but the progress will be ultimately made when the world, particularly that part of the world, firmly and finally rejects terrorist activities.

The other thing that needs to happen, Steve, is that institutions that will enable a Palestinian state to emerge need to be—continue to be fostered and put in place. There needs to be a constitution. There needs to be a capable security force. There needs to be economic hope. The Palestinian people must know that by accepting a peaceful government, by embracing the Prime Ministership of Abu Mazen, that there is a better day ahead for them when it comes to making a living. And so we will work with all parties to promote economic development in a secure environment.

And so we're making progress. I'm pleased. I think we're all—the best way to describe it is, we're really happy with what we've seen so far. But we're realists in this administration. We understand that there has been years of hatred and distrust. And we'll continue to keep the process moving forward.

I talked to President Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan today. I praised them for their efforts. I continue to—I urged them to continue to stay involved in the process, that we all must continue to reject terror, that we must call terrorists what they—by their real name. We must condemn terror in all instances. We must cut off money to terrorist organizations in order to keep this progress moving.

Yes, Terry.

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. On weapons of mass destruction, is it fair to say now, after 2 months of looking for them, that there is a discrepancy between what the intelligence community and you and your top officials described as the threat from Saddam Hussein, and what was actually there on the ground?

The President. No, Saddam Hussein had a weapons program. Remember, he used them. He used chemical weapons on his own people. Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat to the United States, because we removed him. But he was a threat, such a threat that my predecessor, using the same intelligence, in 1998 ordered a bombing of Iraq. I mean, so, no, he was a threat. He's not a threat now. And the world is more peaceful by virtue of the fact that he is not in power.

See, we've been there, what, how many days? You're counting the days since we've been there? Because I'm not. Eighty, ninety? Frankly, it wasn't all that long ago that we started military operations. And we got rid of him much faster than a lot of people thought. And so we're bringing some order to the country, and we're beginning to learn the truth.

But he played his hand, Terry—he, Saddam Hussein—when he used chemical weapons. And then he played his hand by not letting people come in and inspect for the weapons. He had them, and it's just a matter of time. It's a matter of time. The man was a threat to America. He's not a threat today.

But what we're really finding out as well is the threat he posed to the Iraqi people. I mean, we have uncovered some unbelievable scenes. I have not seen them myself. They've been described to me, what it means to see mass graves opened up, with the remains of men and women and children murdered by that regime.

Yes, he was a threat to America. He was a threat to freedom-loving countries. He was a threat in the Middle East. But what we're finding out is the nature of this man when it came to how he dealt with the Iraqi people as well. And it was—it's unbelievable what he did. And I—when it comes to—like the AIDS initiative, we believe in human dignity; we also believe that everybody ought to live in free societies too.

And so we'll stay the course in Iraq. You know, as I said, there's people there that would like to run us out of there, create the conditions where we get nervous and decide to leave. We're not going to get nervous, and we're not leaving until we accomplish the task. And that task is going to be a free country run by the Iraqi people. And that in turn will help the peace

in the Middle East. That in turn will bring stability in a part of the world that needs stability. And I am—I'm optimistic about achieving this objective because I believe that people want to be free. I believe it's in the nature of the individual to love freedom and embrace freedom.

And so it has been a great honor to lead our Nation in not only the cause of humanitarian relief through an AIDS initiative but also to lead our Nation to free people from the clutches of what history will show was an incredibly barbaric regime.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health; Mr. Tobias' wife, Marianne Williams Tobias, and his children, Paige T. Button and Todd C. Tobias; Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations; President Charles Taylor of Liberia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Assistant Secretary of State for Non-proliferation John S. Wolf; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Tobias.

Interview With African Print Journalists July 3, 2003

The President. Thank you all for coming. What I thought I would do is make a couple of opening comments about the upcoming trip and answer some questions, maybe go around the horn a couple of times and give everybody a chance to fire away.

First, I'm really looking forward to the trip. I have been to the continent of Africa twice, but I've never been as President, nor have I been on as extensive a tour as the one we are going on.

I'll be carrying a message to the African people that, first, America cares about the